

# NEWSRELEASE

Montana Department of Corrections • 1539 11th Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620 • 444-3930 • Fax: 444-4920



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, Jan. 3, 2008

CONTACT: Sue Carroll, 447-3276

### **First women graduate from meth treatment center**

History was made Thursday when the first offenders graduated from Montana's inaugural methamphetamine treatment center.

Three women marked the milestone in their lives with a ceremony at the Elkhorn Treatment Center in Boulder, as they completed nine months of intensive treatment.

The 40-bed facility, operated by Helena-based Boyd Andrew Community Services under contract with the Montana Department of Corrections, opened in early April 2007.

The 22,500-square-foot center serves offenders convicted a second or subsequent time of meth possession. Following their treatment, the women will spend six months in aftercare in a prerelease center. Experts believe that is the amount of time necessary to break the addictive hold that meth exerts on users.

The offenders will be tracked after they leave the program to begin the process of measuring the effectiveness of the treatment.

Officials have set a target for success, measured by offenders abstaining from drugs for good once they leave. But Mike Ruppert, chief executive officer for Boyd Andrew, has said he is optimistic that success rates will exceed expectations.

The center employs 27 people and has an annual budget of \$1.85 million. A second treatment center opened for 80 men in Lewistown in June. Its first graduates are expected in late February.

The two centers were authorized by the 2005 Legislature. While the daily rate at Elkhorn is higher than for a day at Montana Women's Prison, corrections officials believe that effective treatment will break the cycle of repeated offenses and incarcerations that are more costly in the long run and fail to return an offender to a productive, law-abiding life.

"I am confident that programs like Elkhorn, that focus on specific problems rather than taking a general approach, will result in a higher rate of success for offenders," said Corrections Director Mike Ferriter.

"I'm incredibly proud of this," Ruppert said. "Our mission at Boyd Andrew is to give people the tools they need to make healthy choices. It's up to the women now. We've put them in a position where they have a choice."

(more)

Although the center houses 40 women, only three graduated Thursday because all of the women did not enter the program at the same time, as Elkhorn gradually launched its operation. Sue Carroll, chief operating officer for Boyd Andrew, said the remainder of the initial contingent of offenders will graduate over the next five months even as new arrivals check in.

Carroll said the first months of the program went well.

“From a program development standpoint, we had an excellent program on paper and, over the course of nine months, we went back to drawing board and modified some of the things we were doing,” she said. “It’s taken on its own shape and personality over the course of the nine months as we fine-tuned it to meet the needs and issues of the women who came in.”

##